DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 378 715 EC 303 611

TITLE	Policy Forum Report: Statewide Evaluation of Programs and Services for Students with Disabilities (Arlington, Virginia, August 30-31, 1994). Final Report. Project FORUM.
INSTITUTION	National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Alexandria, VA.
SPONS AGENCY	Special Education Programs (ED/OSERS), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	22 Nov 94
CONTRACT	HS92015001
NOTE	49p.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Disabilities; *Educational Assessment; *Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; *Evaluation Methods; Program Development; *Program Evaluation; Special Education; *State Programs; Systems Approach

ABSTRACT

This report reviews the outcomes of a forum convened to examine policy and practice issues surrounding the annual evaluation of effectiveness of programs and services for students with disabilities. At the forum, alternative approaches being used by states to implement program evaluation were discussed, along with issues in gathering accountability data and the role of the federal government. The meeting resulted in identifying 11 characteristics of a statewide evaluation system that addresses the education of students with disabilities: clear definitions/purposes, feasible, flexible, capitalizes on prior work, is results-oriented with the goal of improving instructional practice, reflects consensus on outcomes, is inclusive of all students, contains incentives and supports, meets multiple levels of need and use, involves stakeholders, addresses accountability dilemmas, and is linked to reforms for all students. Recommendations are offered for action by the Office of Special Education Programs and state education agencies. Appendixes contain a participant list, an agenda, and a paper by Kenneth Olsen titled "Have We Made Progress in Fifteen Years of Evaluating the Effectiveness of Special Education Programs?," which contains 72 references. The Olsen paper identifies five strands of change that have implications for special education program evaluation such as the changes in emphasis from program improvement to accountability and from simple to complex conceptual models. (JDD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 378 715

POLICY FORUM REPORT: STATEWIDE EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Final Report
Year 2 Deliverable #9-2-1
Under Contract No. HS92015001
September 30, 1994

Prepared for:
Office of Special Education Programs
U.S. Department of Education

Prepared by:
Project FORUM

National Association of State Directors of Special Education
1800 Diagonal Road, Suite 320
Alexandria, VA 22314

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EC 303611

This report was supported in whole or in part by the U.S. Department of Education (Contract No. HS92015001). However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and no official endorsement by the Department should be inferred.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Project FORUM extends its sincere appreciation to the individuals listed below who reviewed and commented on an earlier draft of this document. Their efforts served to enrich the document's quality and accuracy. Our acknowledgement of these individuals does not necessarily indicate their endorsement of the final product.

Richard Baldwin
Special Education Services
Michigan Department of Education

Marsha Brauen
Project Director
WESTAT Corporation

Jerri Hawkins
U.S. Department of Education
Office of Special Education Programs

Mary Ann Lachat
President
Center for Resource Management

Ken Olsen
MidSouth Regional Resource Center
University of Kentucky

Ed Wilkins
Northeast Regional Resource Center
Trinity College of Vermont

Jane Williams
U.S. Department of Education
Office of Special Education Programs

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE POLICY FORUM 1

A. Background and Purpose of the Forum 1
B. Preparation for the Forum 2
C. Process of the Meeting 3

II. OUTCOMES OF THE MEETING 7

A. Characteristics of a Statewide Evaluation System 7
B. Small Group Recommendations 10
C. OSEP 11
D. State Education Agencies 14

III. SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS 15

APPENDIX A: Participant List 16

APPENDIX B: Agenda 19

APPENDIX C: Proposed Components of Statewide Program Evaluation 23

A FORUM ON STATEWIDE EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

I. PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE POLICY FORUM

A. Background and Purpose of the Forum

The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires each State Plan to "provide for procedures for evaluation at least annually of the effectiveness of programs of meeting the educational needs of children with disabilities (including evaluation of individualized education programs)..." (Section 1413(a)(11). In addition, Section 435(b)(4) of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) calls for the State to evaluate the effectiveness of covered programs (including the IDEA) at least every three years.

During the past 20 years, educators have struggled with ways to carry out these requirements (e.g., to evaluate the effectiveness of educational services for children and youth with disabilities). State education agencies have varied considerably in their interpretation of federal program evaluation requirements. For the most part, state education agencies have utilized monitoring compliance as a method of evaluating program effectiveness.

Within the events of the education reform movement, there has been a shift from documenting the process of educating students to demonstrating positive outcomes. Legislators, governors, State and local boards of education, and the public are all demanding increased program accountability.

On August 2-3, 1993, Project FORUM convened a forum to examine policy and practice issues surrounding the annual evaluation of program effectiveness. A follow-up policy forum held a year later in August, 1994 was intended to expand and build on discussions of the earlier forum. Specifically, the policy 1994 forum was convened to carry out the following objectives:

- To identify components/parameters of a statewide system to evaluate programs and services for students with disabilities.
- To consider the challenges and opportunities in the planning and implementation of such a system.
- To consider existing and needed resources to assist SEAs in planning and implementing statewide evaluation systems.

- To identify policy changes and resources needed at the federal, state, and local levels that can facilitate the planning and implementation of statewide evaluation systems/procedures.

B. Preparation for the Forum

Project FORUM staff worked with the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) personnel to identify 16 participants for the forum (Appendix A). Participants included state directors of special education, college/university representatives, Regional Resource Center staff, a representative of a parent/advocate organization, local school district administrators, and private organization representatives.

Dr. Judy Schrag, from Project FORUM, prepared a paper to serve as background to this forum, *Evaluating the Impact and Effectiveness of Special Education Based on Program and Student Outcomes.* This paper included a review of selected reports, documents, and articles pertaining to statewide evaluation of programs and services for students with disabilities. In addition, several other program evaluation papers were sent to participants prior to the August forum or were included in forum packets:

- Brauen, M., O'Reilly, F. & Moore, M. (1994). *Issues and options in outcome-based accountability for students with disabilities.* College Park, MD: University of Maryland.

- Project FORUM (1993). *A forum to examine policy and practice issues surrounding the annual evaluation of program effectiveness.* Alexandria, Virginia: National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

- Olsen, K. (1994). *Have we made progress in fifteen years of evaluating the effectiveness of special education programs?* Lexington, Kentucky: Mid-South Regional Resource Center Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute.

- Olsen, K. (1994). *Bibliography on evaluating effectiveness of services to students with disabilities.* Lexington, Kentucky: Mid-South Regional Resource Center Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute.

- Ysseldyke, J., et. al. (May, 1994). *Students with disabilities & educational standards: Recommendations for policy & practice. NCEO Policy Directions, Number 2. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes.*

- Ysseldyke, J., et. al. (May, 1994). *Guidelines for inclusion of students with disabilities in large-scale assessments*. NCEO Policy Directions, Number 1. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes.

- Ysseldyke, J., Thurlow, M. & Geene, K. (1994). *Implementation of alternative methods for making educational accountability decisions for students with disabilities*. Synthesis Report 6. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes.

Extensive work has been carried out by previous and existing projects funded by OSEP, as well as individual researchers. This background material was important to assist forum participants in not "plowing ground already covered" in previous forums/meetings and other work.

C. Process of the Meeting

The forum on program evaluation was held on August 30-31, 1994 at the Ritz Carlton Hotel, Pentagon City, Arlington, Virginia. The agenda (Appendix B) began with welcoming remarks from Joy Hicks, Director, Project FORUM, and Dr. Lou Danielson, Director, Division of Innovation and Development-OSEP. Dr. Thomas Hehir, Director, OSEP, provided a context for the program evaluation forum. He indicated that considerable gains have been made for students with disabilities and their families during the past two decades. It is important that we focus on the results of these efforts. Within the federal government, there is an emphasis on developing indicators of success for various federal programs, including the IDEA. Dr. Hehir also indicated that we will need to look at the total system. If we are going to have a greater focus on program and student outcomes, we will have to give up on some things and strengthen others. There is a need to move away from an exclusive look at compliance with the procedural requirements of IDEA, and to focus on "outcomes" or results of our educational system on students with disabilities.

The first morning of the forum proceeded with a panel presentation on alternative approaches being used by states to implement program evaluation. Dr. Jim Ysseldyke discussed several current evaluation alternatives: use of child count, administration of norm-referenced tests, focus on results or outcomes, aggregation of IEP objectives or goals attained, secondary analysis of extant data, and accreditation programs. Dr. Ysseldyke also discussed the following issues encountered by state personnel in their efforts to gather accountability data:

The attitude that evaluation is not important or a priority.
Lack of commitment to get people to collect data.
Complex process of agreeing on outcomes and standards.
Determination of the source of responsibility for student learning.

Issues of inclusion in assessment.
How to report information and what to report.
Determination of the role of the SEA.
Use of sanctions and rewards.
Determination of the utility--is it worth it to shift resources from program to data collection?
Fear.
Local control.
Lack of agreement on how to measure complex skills.
Procedures for dealing with students in non-graded classrooms.
Absence of utility. (when data is collected, no one uses it).

Dr. Ysseldyke reported on a meeting held by the National Center for Educational Outcomes last September. Participants in that meeting indicated that a heavy federal involvement will be needed to help overcome the barrier of collecting data and to implement outcome evaluation rather than focusing on monitoring program processes. Participants at this meeting and others have indicated that they need data on the following to demonstrate that education works for students with disabilities:

I. Input

1. Resources (e.g., money spent per pupil, staffing ratios, instructional time).
2. Student characteristics (e.g., percentage of first graders with kindergarten experience, student mobility, number of limited English speaking students, Chapter 1 students, number on free/reduced priced meals).

II. Process

1. Opportunity to learn.
2. Inclusion of students with disabilities in general education.
3. Teacher expectations for individual pupil performance.
4. Extent to which IEP's translate into instruction.

III. Outcomes

1. Academic and functional skills.
2. Valued social and emotional outcomes.
3. Generalization of school learning to everyday life.
4. Student and parent satisfaction.
5. Independent living.
6. Community participation.

7. Extent to which the "product" of schools meets the needs of the labor market.

Dr. Ysseldyke also discussed several recommended practices: create incentives for people to gather data; make certain the data collection process makes sense to those who will implement and those who will be impacted (stakeholder involvement and buy-in); do not invent new data collection activities; use an outcomes-based approach (e.g., NCEO self-study guide); train those who will gather data; and make sure data collected are used.

Dr. Mary Ann Lachat reported on program evaluation efforts in New Hampshire. The Center for Resource Management has been assisting the New Hampshire Department of Education to build state and local capacity to improve student results through the use of a wide array of data. Dr. Lachat described New Hampshire's new statewide standards-based assessment program which has been designed to include all students, including those with disabilities. A key purpose of the program is to promote higher standards of learning and increased academic achievement for all students. Statewide assessment data will be desegregated for students with disabilities to examine program effectiveness for this population. Dr. Lachat indicated that the NH Department of Education is also providing support to help local school districts develop the information system capacity necessary to support accountability, site-based evaluation, and program improvement. CRM has developed a software program that creates an integrated database, linking student performance, demographic data, and programmatic data. Data can be aggregated at the state level and desegregated at the local level for planning. The state agency has provided support to this effort through the State Agency/Federal Evaluation Studies (SAFES) Program and the New Hampshire School Improvement Program. The program is being installed at several demonstration sites--training is provided to principals, special educators, and data entry personnel.

Ms. Nancy LaCount presented the Kentucky Instructional Results and Information System which is based upon academic expectations. This system has multiple evaluations, including portfolio assessment in math and reading. Kentucky is beginning to collect massive data with a new technology system. Student questionnaires are being used including questions about homework. Other data collected includes extent of time missed from school, if students are using a higher type of math, type of post school plans, non-cognitive information, etc. Patterns of performance within a classroom can target technical assistance needed. Data and information gathered can guide local schools into transformation planning. The Kentucky assessment program is beginning to look at information about students with disabilities and has developed statewide alternative portfolio systems for assessing students with more severe cognitive disabilities. This sub-system is integrated in the overall system.. Along with an outcome focus, Kentucky continues to use monitoring and conducts special studies on specific issues. Data and information being gathered is being utilized for planning. A final point was made about the need for dedicated staff and professional development in order to implement statewide program evaluation procedures.

Dr. Richard Baldwin, Director of the Michigan Office of Special Education, reported on their outcome-based system. He stated that Michigan has outcomes established for each of its twelve disabilities areas, at preschool, third, sixth, ninth and graduation levels. The outcomes were developed with extensive input from parents, teachers, administrators, people with disabilities, and university personnel. Michigan is also undergoing extensive training of teachers, administrators, and parents in how to use the outcomes (assessing students and interpreting data). Michigan uses Part D training funds, as well as state-initiated project dollars for this massive training component. The outcome-based program in Michigan is not mandated; use of outcomes is at the discretion of school administrators and teachers. Lacking a mandate, the system is not used as extensively as Dr. Baldwin and others would hope. Finally, he pointed out that the outcome project fits nicely with reform initiatives in the Michigan education system.

Following lunch, Dr. Ken Olsen, Mid-South Regional Resource Center, presented a "strawman" to serve as a focus of discussion and reaction by the forum participants (Appendix C). A proposed statewide system of program evaluation with the following eight components was presented:

1. Consensus on philosophy, purpose, and definitions
2. Consensus on student outcomes and conceptual framework
3. Ongoing data on student outcomes
4. Training and technical assistance for local programs
5. Ongoing data on educational resources, practices, and results
6. SEA policy studies
7. Data based decision making
8. Reporting to stakeholders

Dr. Olsen proposed ten foundations for statewide program evaluation:

1. Standards or guidelines for evaluating effectiveness must be based primarily on best practices in evaluation rather than on legal obligations.

2. The requirement to evaluate effectiveness of all IEPs is a charge to look at the effects not the document.

3. An effective educational program is one that achieves valued outcomes and protects individual and group rights while using resources and activities that are directly related to those outcomes and rights.

4. Evaluation involves comparing an actual state of affairs to a desired state of affairs.

5. Our goal is to evaluate the effectiveness of educational supports and services to students with disabilities **not** to evaluate "special education".

6. The function of evaluation is to provide information to reduce uncertainty in decision making.

7. All evaluation is formative in relation to some level of the organization.

8. Evaluation does not have to be external to be useful, proper, or accurate.

9. The potential of evaluation data to serve program improvement purposes is compromised when those same data are used for accountability purposes by a supervising agency.

10. SEAs have unique and essential roles in modeling and supporting evaluation for program improvement in addition to their roles in the area of accountability.

Following group discussion of these perspectives and the proposed statewide system of program evaluation, participants within three small groups began to identify suggested components and parameters for a statewide program evaluation system, as well as to identify issues for consideration in the planning and implementing of a statewide program evaluation system.

The second day of the program evaluation forum included a discussion of challenges/opportunities in the implementation of program evaluation. In addition, the forum participants identified needed policy changes and assistance at the federal, state, and local levels to support the planning and implementation of state evaluation systems and procedures.

II. OUTCOMES OF THE MEETING

Project FORUM staff utilized laptop computers to record the large group discussions during the program evaluation forum. Flip chart paper and acetate overlays were utilized by the small groups to record discussions. Following is a summary of responses within eleven major categories to the question:

What are the characteristics of a statewide evaluation system that address the education of students with disabilities?

Clear Definitions/Purposes

- Defines terms within the system of evaluation for clear communication.
- Articulates key evaluation questions. Contains a mechanism for further developing and reviewing evaluation questions.
- Presents a set of belies developed by stakeholder consensus.
- Focuses on outcomes of education and student attained of valued outcomes.
- Is logically congruent among components.
- Is fair with respect to gender, race, culture, and disability status.

Feasible

- Uses assessment that minimizes the burden on students, that does not detract from instruction, and that enhances and promotes learning.
- Can be operationalized efficiently.
- Utilizes appropriate technology to be integrated with extant databases so that it is aligned with data on all children.
- Is cost effective.
- Has reasonable standards based on student improvements.

Flexible

- Uses varied quantitative and qualitative data sources to get varied perspectives.
- Accommodates various data collection methods that focus on outcomes of education.
- Includes multiple options for assessment of student attainment of valued outcomes.
- Accommodates the changing nature of schooling and evolving educational practices.

Capitalizes on Prior Work

The development effort:

- Identifies best practices and moves forward from that point.
- Looks at a broad range of materials on the subject and questions that are stated in the evaluation purpose.
- Reviews existing work for the selected subject, as a preliminary step to the development of evaluation plans.
- Capitalizes on professional evaluation standards.
- Applies what is understood about "change".

Is Results-Oriented with goal of Improving Instructional Practice

- Has the capacity to disaggregate to answer specific data questions related to program improvement.
- Is oriented toward improving programs and instructional practices which result in attainment of improved student outcomes.
- Looks at opportunity-to-learn standards.
- Balances outcome assessment with process/rights.
- Evaluates post-school short and long-term outcomes.
- Includes judgements/decisions which are standards-referenced.

Reflects Consensus on Outcomes and Inclusive of All Students

- Includes outcomes/performance indicators on which there is stakeholder consensus.
- Applies performance indicators and standards that are inclusive and applicable to <u>all</u> students, yet reflect the unique needs of students with disabilities.
- Is based on and identifies high expectations for all students.

Contains Incentives and Supports

- Considers incentives and supports (technical assistance) for data collection.
- Uses scenarios to demonstrate the use of data and possible program changes (i.e. how education for students will improve; and how things will change for the better for classroom teachers, the principal).
- Provides stakeholder education regarding evaluation concepts, design, implementation, and use of the evaluation system.
- Provides statewide training on the evaluation process and expectations.

Meets Multiple Levels of Need and Use

- Produces data that have meaning and utility at all levels collected (federal, state, and local), and used for decision making. This includes effective marketing and dissemination strategies.
- Provides continuity among components of the evaluation system across all levels (classroom, school district, state, and federal).
- Provides a core set of data that can be aggregated across states.
- Provides for evaluation data and interpretations to be disseminated to and potentially used by all stakeholders.
- Provides information that can be used to predict trends over time.

Involves Stakeholders

- Provides for evaluation data and interpretation to be disseminated to and potentially used by all stakeholders.
- Is developed by a broad-based constituency that represents the diversity of persons in the community, including persons with a disability.
- Has a process for broad-based stakeholders to be continually involved; 1) up front, to decide what to evaluate and how to evaluate; 2). during evaluation to monitor the process and help figure out if it is going well and 3). at

periodic benchmarks to evaluate how it worked and the extent to which it resulted in improved outcomes/benefits for students and systems.

Addresses Accountability Dilemmas

- Includes rewards and sanctions to address accountability expectations of multiple clients (OSEP, SEA, state and local school boards, legislature, public, etc.).

- Does not confuse compliance monitoring with evaluations recognizing that these are two different paradigms.

Linked to Reforms for All Students

- Is tied to local school building improvement plans for all children, including those placed outside their home school.

- Is linked to GOALS 2000 and School-to-Work implementation, and other pertinent reform/restructuring efforts within each state.

- Assesses the effectiveness of special education services as part of the assessment of all education services.

- Ensures that all evaluation plans, efforts, and guidelines are in the context of state and local level reform.

After a review of the work of day one, the remainder of the second day of the forum was spent by discussing the following questions:

What will the state education agencies need to facilitate their planning and implementation of statewide evaluation systems (e.g., resources, assistance and policy changes at the federal, state, and local levels)?

Following is a summary of the recommendations to OSEP and state education agencies that were generated by small and large group discussion.

OSEP

- OSEP should clearly communicate the importance of program evaluation as part of the National Agenda, and include the expectation of program evaluation within funding priorities, within requirements for state plans and in content within workshops and conferences, etc.

- OSEP should develop and support systems for additional training that is needed at all levels (federal, state, and local) in the area of evaluation.

- The OSEP plan should begin meeting the training needs of its staff including state contacts for Part B and other contract/project staff who will deliver evaluation technical assistance (e.g., Parent Training and Information Centers; Regional Resource Centers; and other technical assistance, training, and information projects). This could be a Division of Personnel Preparation priority.

- OSEP should conduct a needs assessment of its federal office and selected contract/project staff to determine the extent of prior knowledge that staff have in the area of evaluation and then set forth plans to initiate a trainer of trainers model across divisions. This plan should include persons from all of OSEP divisions.

- OSEP should consider recommendations made by an earlier SAFES Workgroup, including extending the length of funded projects, linking the Regional Resource Centers to funded projects, and providing support for the development of evaluation designs (feasibility studies).

- OSEP should work toward bringing together general and special education policy implementers, who are working with GOALS 2000, to consider the work of this forum; (e.g., National Center on Educational Outcomes, SAFES project personnel, Regional Resource Center staff, representatives of the National Academy of Science, NECTAS, National Association of State Directors of Special Education, etc).

- With the assistance of professionals from the area of educational evaluation, OSEP should include in its annual leadership meeting sessions on statewide program evaluation or devote an entire leadership meeting on statewide program evaluation. OSEP program staff whose training and experience are in program evaluation should be involved in planning and implementing these sessions.

- OSEP should convene other groups with general and special education counterparts responsible for program evaluation at the state level.

- OSEP should conceptualize a congruent structure of statewide program evaluation in which special education program evaluation is integrated into overall education evaluation.

- OSEP should add to the evaluation criteria requirement of discretionary projects/applications the requirement to include a link to the overall statewide evaluation plan.

- OSEP should place program evaluation assistance to state education agencies as a priority by Regional Resource Centers after and as an extension of the technical assistance "training of trainers" plan.

- OSEP's workgroups regarding the re-authorization of IDEA should develop clear language that requires the inclusion of students with disabilities within GOALS 2000 policies, programs, procedures, and practice.

- OSEP should set a priority for its re-authorization workgroup that IDEA should be reframed to reflect a results-oriented, accountability system with child protections maintained. There should be incentives for states to develop and implement results-oriented supports and services at the local level that demonstrate high levels of learning for students with disabilities.

- OSEP should seek assistance from professionals in the area of educational evaluation in defining compliance monitoring as a component that supports a results-oriented accountability system. A discrepancy analysis should be performed to identify those regulations that support or create barriers to a results-oriented accountability system as part of the comprehensive educational system.

- OSEP's workgroup for re-authorization should develop language to be added to IDEA that re-states the importance and value of statewide program evaluation.

- OSEP should provide systems change grants/assistance for all state education agencies in the area of statewide program evaluation within an existing discretionary program or a new discretionary program created within IDEA re-authorization.

- OSEP should organize a task force of educators from its staff, RRC, and the state level to collaborate regarding the structure of the IEP to support/reflect a results-oriented approach for each child.

- OSEP's grants/applications for staff development at both the preservice and inservice training levels should require that proposals reflect a service orientation and that it should be is delivered through collaborative training approaches of general and special education. More funding, more

demonstrations, and coordination of funding for program evaluation are needed.

- OSEP should lead a movement aimed at determining how legislation and policies at the federal level can be implemented or revised to support collaboration across agencies and divisions within agencies.

- OSEP should articulate clear expectation about evaluation to SEAS, hold them accountable for the implementation of statewide program evaluation, and give them the autonomy to do so within an established set of standards. The standards should be including in the re-authorization of IDEA (e.g., identify required core elements of statewide program evaluation). Beyond this set of expectations, SEAs should have autonomy in the planning and implementation process.

State Education Agencies (SEAs)

- SEAs need to prioritize statewide program evaluation and clearly and consistently communicate the importance of evaluation.

- SEAs need to implement a congruent structure for program evaluation that integrates special education program evaluation within overall educational program evaluation.

- SEAs need to include the development and implementation of statewide program evaluation within SEA funding priorities (20% state discretionary funds).

- SEAs should provide guidance materials and training for local education agencies related to statewide program evaluation.

- It is important for SEAs to be aware of the current stress in the system; e.g., school districts are implementing a number of federal and state education reform activities and initiatives.

- State legislation as well as policies at the state and local levels should support collaboration across agencies and divisions within agencies.

III. SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Several materials were utilized to stimulate discussion by forum participants: background documents pertaining to program evaluation sent prior to the forum, additional information included within forum packets, and a "strawman" of proposed set of parameters for a statewide system for evaluating programs and services for students with disabilities. Fifty components/ descriptors of a statewide program evaluation were identified in this forum within eleven major categories. In addition, a number of recommendations were made regarding resources, policy changes, and other assistance needed at the federal, state, and local levels to facilitate the planning and implementation of statewide systems to evaluate programs and services for students with disabilities.

These recommendations included the need for clear communication at the federal and state level regarding the importance of program evaluation. There is also a need for training in the area of program evaluation to be provided for OSEP staff, SEA staff, OSEP-funded entities charged with providing technical assistance, and local school districts. Forum participants recommended that a congruent structure of program evaluation should be articulated at the federal and state levels in which special education program evaluation is integrated into overall educational evaluation systems. During the re-authorization process, forum participants recommended that changes be made to IDEA which clearly express the importance and value of statewide program evaluation and the focus on program and student results.

It is important that OSEP and the SEAs place a higher priority on statewide program evaluation. Forum participants recommended that the OSEP annual leadership conference contain sessions on program evaluation. In addition, other workshops and conferences with general and special education personnel responsible for program evaluation should be held in order to facilitate joint planning and implementation within the states.

APPENDIX A: Participant List

Invited Guests:

Richard Baldwin
Special Education Services
Michigan Department of Education
P.O. Box 30008
Lansing MI 48909-7508
517/373-9433

Marsha Brauen
WESTAT Corporation
1650 Research Boulevard
Rockville, MD 20850-3129
301/738-3668

Martha Brooks
Division for Exceptional Children
Department of Public Instruction
P.O. Box 1402
Dover, DE 19903-1402
302/739-5471

Sharon Freagon
Department of Special Education
EPCSE
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, IL 60115
815/753-0656

Pat Gonzalez
NSTEP at NASDSE
1800 Diagonal Road
Suite 320
Alexandria, VA 22314
202/519-3800

Mary Ann Lachat
Center for Resource Management
2 Highland Road
South Hampton, NH 03827-3607
603/394-7040

Nancy LaCount
Kentucky Department of Education
Div. of Exceptional Children Svs.
Capitol Plaza Tower, 17th Floor
Frankfort, KY 40601
502/564-2672

Jim Leinen
Western Regional Resource Center
1268 University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403-1268
503/346-5641

Margaret J. McLaughlin
Institute for the Study of
Exceptional Children
College of Education
University of Maryland
1302 Benjamin Building
College Park, MD 20742-1161
301/405-6495

Ken Olsen
MidSouth Regional Resource Center
University of Kentucky
126 Mineral Industries Building
Lexington, KY 40506-0051
606/257-4921

Gordon A. Schuetz
Exceptional Education
and Supportive Services
5225 West Vliet Street
Milwaukee, WI 53208
414/475-8745

Ed Wilkins
Northeast Regional Resource Center
Trinity College of Vermont
208 Colchester Avenue
Burlington, VT 05401
802/658-5036

Martha Williams
Center for Resource Management
2 Highland Road
South Hampton, NH 03827-3507
603/394-7040

Dee Spinkston
Federation for Families with Special
Needs
Suite 104
95 Berkeley Street
Boston, MA 02116
617/482-2915

James Ysseldyke
National Center on Educational
Outcomes
University of Minnesota
350 Elliot Hall
75 East River Road
Minneapolis, MN 55455
612/626-1530

U.S. Department of Education:

Thomas Hehir
Lou Danielson
Gerrie Hawkins
Jane Case Williams
Ruth Ryder

NASDSE Staff:

Joy Hicks
Eileen Ahearn
Pecolia Freeman
Joy Markowitz
Judy Schrag
Lyn Sweetapple

APPENDIX B: Agenda

STATEWIDE EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

August 30th and 31st, 1994

AGENDA

Tuesday, August 30, 1994

8:00 - 9:00	Continental Breakfast
9:00 - 9:15	Welcome *Joy Hicks - Director, Project FORUM*
9:15 - 9:30	o Opening Remarks/Background Review of Federal Program Evaluation Requirements and Other Considerations Impacting Program Evaluation *Lou Danielson - Director, Division of Innovation and Development*
9:30 - 9:45	Participant Introductions
9:45 - 10:00	Orientation and Logistics *Judy Schrag - Policy Analyst, Project FORUM* *Martha Williams - Forum Facilitator*
10:10 - 10:15	♦ ♦ ♦ Break ♦ ♦ ♦
10:15 - 11:45	Panel Presentation: Alternative Approaches Being Used by States to Implement Program Evaluation *Pat Gonzalez - Information Services Coordinator, NASDSE - Panel Moderator* *Jim Ysseldyke - Director, National Center on Educational Outcomes* *Mary Ann Lachat - President, Center for Resource Management* *Nancy LaCount - Branch Manager, Kentucky SEA* *Richard Baldwin - State Director of Special Education, Michigan SEA*
11:45 - 12:00	Overview of the Afternoon Work *Martha Williams - Forum Facilitator*

12:00 - 1:00	Lunch
1:00 - 2:00	Suggested Components/Parameters of a Statewide Program Evaluation System - Programs and Services for Students With Disabilities *Ken Olsen - Technical Assistance Specialist, Mid-South Regional Resource Center*
2:00 - 2:15	Comments - Evaluation of Programs and Services for Students With Disabilities *Tom Hehir - Director, OSEP*
2:15 - 3:30	Discussion of Suggested Components/Parameters of a Statewide Program Evaluation System: Identification of Further Considerations for Re-conceptualizing/Conceptualizing State Systems for Program Evaluation
3:30 - 3:45	Break
3:45 - 4:45	Small Group Sharing/Group Discussion: Components, Parameters, and Considerations: State Systems for Program Evaluation
4:45 - 5:00	Summary of the Day *Martha Williams - Facilitator*
Evening	Optional Group Dinner

Wednesday, August 31, 1994

8:00 - 8:30	Continental Breakfast
8:30 - 9:00	Plans/Expectations for the Day *Martha Williams - Facilitator*
9:00 - 9:45	Challenges/Opportunities to Implementation of Program Evaluation
9:45 - 10:15	Small Group Presentations/Group Discussion: Challenges/Opportunities to Implementation of Program Evaluation
10:15 - 10:30	Break/Checkout

10:30 - 10:45	**Existing Resources to Assist SEAs in Planning and Implementing Statewide Systems or Procedures for Evaluation of Programs and Services for Students With Disabilities** *Judy Schrag - Policy Analyst, Project FORUM*
10:45 - 11:30	**Identification of Additional Federal/State/Local Resources, Policy Changes, and Other Assistance Needed to Support the Planning and Implementation of State Systems or Procedures for Evaluation of Programs and Services for Students With Disabilities**
11:30 - 12:00	**Group Discussion of Existing and Needed Evaluation Resources, Policy Changes and Other Needed Assistance**
12:00 - 12:15	**Summary/Next Steps** *Martha Williams - Forum Facilitator* *Joy Hicks - Director, Project FORUM*

APPENDIX C: Proposed Components of Statewide Program Evaluation

Have We Made Progress in Fifteen Years of Evaluating the Effectiveness of Special Education Programs?

Kenneth Olsen
Mid-South Regional Resource Center
Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute
University of Kentucky

August 1994

Accepted for publication in *Special Services in the Schools*.
Pre-publication draft. Do not cite or quote.

Introduction

The desire of special educators to move beyond compliance monitoring to evaluating the effectiveness of special education programs has been expressed for over fifteen years (e.g., see Olsen, 1979). Approaches to evaluating effectiveness have been put forth since shortly after the passage of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (now the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA) while noting the lack of consistent definition of terms, lack of consensus on a conceptual model to interrelate the inputs, processes and outcomes in special education programs and, most importantly, lack of agreement on what it means to have an effective special education program (Borich, 1977). While all of these concerns still remain today, a number of significant changes are taking place in the ways that evaluation of services to students with disabilities is viewed and in the ways evaluation is approached. The purpose of this article is to provide evaluators of such services with a context for their work; to help them understand how we have arrived at this point and, perhaps, what is on the horizon.

Five strands of change can be identified that have implications for the present and future of special education program evaluation:

From	To
Schools and districts as locus of control, with limited Federal involvement.	State and Federal structures driving evaluation with more active Federal involvement.
Evaluation for program improvement.	Evaluation for accountability.
Evaluation of inputs and processes.	Evaluation of outcomes and effects in the context of inputs and processes.
Simple models of inputs, processes and outputs.	More sophisticated conceptual models taking in a larger number of factors.
Student learning outcomes specific to special education.	Integration of outcomes in larger general education and human service frameworks.

Local to State and Federal Control

While most of the efforts of the '70's and '80's focused on helping schools and local education agencies (LEAs) plan and conduct evaluation (Olsen, 1984, 1986), there now is an increasing tendency for aggregate evaluations at state and Federal levels. State and Federal support for special education program evaluation has reflected this change. In the 1970's the U.S. Office of Special Education funded the Evaluation Training Consortium at Western Michigan University and the University of Virginia. Although the initial intent of this project was to develop program evaluation procedures for higher education, its work expanded to help guide LEAs in conducting self-evaluations,. The project culminated with the production of *Program Evaluation: A Practitioner's Guide for Trainers and Educators* (Brinkerhoff, Brethower, Hluchyj, and Nowakowski, 1983). This evaluation reference tool for special educators spawned a number of state resource documents and training events. Workbook-type manuals and team training events in the states of Florida, Maine, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia and Utah have roots in that guide, and, to a great extent, in each other. For example, the Florida materials (Florida Department of Education, 1985) were modified for use in Maryland and those materials were, in turn, modified for use in Virginia and, finally, West Virginia (McLaughlin, 1990b). Similarly, The Missouri Special Education Evaluation System (SEES) (Missouri Section of Special Education, 1985) led to the Utah SEES (Utah Consortium of Local Directors of Special Education, 1988). The intent of each was to provide step-by-step guidance to help LEAs plan and conduct their own evaluations.

In 1988 the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) produced *Special Education Program Evaluation: An Overview,* (McLaughlin, 1988) which drew from earlier efforts to provide a workbook-type approach for local evaluations. West Virginia and Kansas later expanded on the CASE document and used their manuals to conduct training and to provide follow-up technical assistance for local teams of special educators from schools and school districts (McLaughlin, 1990a). In all cases the evaluations were driven by locally identified needs and designed by local stakeholders.

During this same era, other states were providing local systems with general handbooks on evaluating special education programs (e.g., California, 1982; Illinois, 1982; Rhode Island, 1984). Other states were providing their LEAs with specific forms, data collection procedures, and report formats (e.g., Massachusetts, 1981; North Carolina, 1983; Connecticut - Maher, Coppola, Ongley and Kahn, 1986).

However, local school districts were given the option of using those tools or others that they chose. Some commercial materials on special education evaluation were produced (Nance and Borich, 1986; Maher and Bennett, 1984), but these too presented methods for local education agencies to select components of their special education system and design evaluations for those components. In addition to providing materials, training and technical assistance, states such as Maryland, North Carolina and others provided incentive funding for LEA-initiated self studies (Olsen, 1986). States, therefore, have provided support for LEA evaluations but historically have not required use of common formats and procedures.

However, DeStefano (1990) points out that:

> "The absence of specific guidelines or monitoring agency to standardize the types of evaluation to be collected permits creativity in evaluation design ... but exacerbates problems associated with cross-site aggregation of evaluation data. Use of different instruments across projects to measure student and program characteristics make combination or comparison of data problematic .... a system for standardizing the collection of certain evaluation data may be desirable to enable the meaningful aggregation of data across sites." (p. 262).

Therefore, an increasing number of states are developing special education outcome and indicator systems that cut across LEA lines (e.g., Michigan, New Jersey) and nearly all states are looking at ways to move some of their state resources from monitoring LEAs for compliance to monitoring them from effectiveness. Over half of the states are exploring results-based or outcome-based monitoring either as an alternative or adjunct to its system of monitoring for compliance to Federal and state requirements. For example, Texas has been piloting a results-based monitoring system for two years (Gray, 1994). The Texas system is implemented by a state team that makes judgments about effectiveness as well as compliance. The effectiveness component is optional for school districts and currently carries no potential for sanctions. However, this approach is indicative of the tendency for states to take a more active role in structuring and coordinating evaluation activities.

Until very recently Federal involvement in special education evaluation has paralleled state approaches, i.e., supporting local option evaluations and allowing states maximum flexibility in interpreting Federal requirements. In 1983 the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) funded an institute "to offer technical assistance and logistical support to the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) and to as many as 12 Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in the implementation and testing of models for the evaluation of special education

programs" (CASE, 1983). This project and most subsequent efforts by OSEP demonstrated that the Federal government had little interest in mandating special education evaluation standards or practices nor in gathering national data on effectiveness.

Evaluating the effectiveness of special education and specifically of individualized education programs as required by IDEA has proceeded without Federal direction. For example, there has always been a requirement in state IDEA plans for a section describing how the state will conduct evaluation of special education program effectiveness and specifically how the state will evaluate the effectiveness of individualized education programs (IEPs). Federal attention to this requirement has been spotty, at best. The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) recently analyzed the evaluation components of state plans over time and found:

- An increase in the number of states that discuss compliance monitoring in the annual evaluation sections of the State Plan and Part B Performance Report.
- An increase in the number of states that describe a two-tiered approach to the annual evaluation requirement, whereby the LEAs have specific evaluation requirements and the state has specific monitoring requirements.
- An increase in the number of states that encourage LEA "self-study." This practice was described by different states as a pre-monitoring tool or an evaluation tool.
- An increase in the number of states that provide technical assistance to LEAs to help them evaluate their programs and procedures. (Gonzalez, 1992).

Such plans were approved by OSEP, and therefore the Federal government tacitly endorsed evaluation as something that was locally designed and driven. Attempts were made by OSEP and its contractors in 1985, 1987 and 1990 to produce more clear criteria for these sections of the state plans (personal communications), but each attempt failed to be approved as an official guideline for state evaluation systems.

However, the winds might be changing. Perhaps the most aggressive Federal effort to date has been the State Agency/Federal Evaluation Studies (SAFES) program. The SAFES program provides for cooperative agreements between the U.S. Department of Education and state agencies to conduct evaluations of special education programs and services. Through this program, states propose evaluation studies and the Federal government provides funding and technical assistance for

the state-designed efforts. The program has evolved from a series of unrelated and unguided studies to an increasing emphasis on themes that are of national concern (e.g., assessment of outcomes, especially as they relate to national frameworks, has been increasingly evident in funding announcement priorities).

The funding of the National Longitudinal Transition Study (Wagner, 1990) and the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) at the University of Minnesota are evidence of an increased Federal interest in more commonalty in state and national evaluations of services to students with disabilities. In addition, OSEP appears to be placing more emphasis on projects with national data collection potential, such as the Performance Assessment for Self-Sufficiency -Project PASS (Campeau, 1993).

Therefore, both state and national support for evaluation of services to students with disabilities appears to be moving toward centralized information collection and away from LEA-driven evaluations. Olsen and Massanari (1991) have argued for a balanced approach that includes having some ongoing data available at the state level on services to students with disabilities and on the effects of those services, a system for SEA self-evaluation, and support for LEA self-evaluations. It is likely that pressure toward more centralized evaluation functions will continue as the public continues to demand more data on overall cost and effects of services for students with disabilities.

From Program Improvement to Accountability

Paralleling the increasing emphasis on centralized evaluation is a change in the purpose for which special education evaluations are conducted. The clearly defined purposes of the past: to improve the services and programs; are giving way to a new purpose: accountability. Horvath (1985) defined evaluation for program improvement as a management tool for identifying specific components of the LEA special education program that need attention. He defined evaluation for accountability as a way of providing information to administrative, regulatory, oversight or funding authorities about the operations and effects of a program.

The change from program improvement to accountability as the purpose for special education program evaluation is consistent with the national demands for reform in general education. No longer are stakeholders willing to leave educational decision making in the hands of educators. Persons with a stake in the education of students with disabilities are asking if special education services are

resulting in expected changes and even if the effort is worth the results that are being achieved (Lewis, 1991; Zirkel, 1990).

"Outcome-based accountability" and "results-based monitoring" have become bywords. Even though an assumption of outcome-based accountability systems is that they will improve student performance, the emphasis of these new systems is on ensuring that the educational system delivers what is expected of it (Center for Policy Options in Special Education, 1992). Stakeholders are demanding information on the extent to which expected results are being obtained and are demanding that rewards and sanctions be established as contingencies for accomplishment of outcomes. Even the *National Agenda for Achieving Better Results for Children and Youth with Disabilities* recommends that special educators "(i)mplement accountability systems that monitor program effectiveness, balancing process with results, and provide incentives for program improvement and sanctions for noncompliance. " (COSMOS, 1994, p. 18).

The potential negative side effects of using incentives and sanctions in a rigorous accountability approach to program evaluation in special education have yet to be fully explored (Olsen, 1994; Center for Policy Options in Special Education, 1992). While the debate among assessment and evaluation researchers continues to escalate regarding the feasibility of using the same assessment systems for both program accountability and improvement purposes, policymakers are proceeding as if there will be few problems. However, it is becoming increasingly apparent that high stakes environments can lead to superficial adherence to standards, inappropriate placements and restricted curricula and instruction (Rogers, 1983; Fullan, 1991; Center for Policy Options in Special Education, 1992).

From Evaluation of Process to Outcomes and Back Again

Evaluation of special education programs and services has historically focused on answering such input questions as, "Are staff qualified?", "Are materials available?", and "Are facilities accessible?" or such process questions as, "Were parents involved in the decision process?", "Does the student's program match his IEP?", and "Are students participating with their nondisabled peers?" However, the growing dissatisfaction with access and process as the intent of special education and the increasing demand for more information on outcomes is well documented (Olsen, 1979; Borich and Nance, 1987; Vogelsberg, 1994; George, George and Grosenick, 1990). Now there is a new realization - that outcomes data without information on the programs and services that led to those outcomes will leave the

public with no basis for making decisions about needed changes (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Bruininks, Gilman, Deno, McGrew, and Shriner, 1992).

The Annual Reports to Congress from OSEP have provided information on the numbers of students in special education, on the number of teachers available and needed and on the extent to which students are in integrated placements, but, until recently, have provided very little information on the outcomes of those inputs and processes (DeStefano and Wagner, 1990)). A few special projects such as the National Longitudinal Transition Study (Wagner, 1990) have provided the nation with a limited picture of such outcomes, but such information has been scarce. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation special report entitled "Serving Handicapped Children" (1988) stated that the "emphasis on the availability and use of services should not obscure concerns about the quality of these services, concerns that cannot be addressed without substantially more information about children's progress over time" (p. 17). Likewise, the report of the National Council in Disability (1989) described the feelings of parents, educators and taxpayers in every locale:

> The time has come to ask the same questions for students with disabilities that we have been asking about students without disabilities:
> - Are they achieving?
> - Are they staying in school?
> - Are they prepared to enter the work force when they finish school?
> - Are they going on to participate in postsecondary education and training?
> - Are they prepared for adult life? (p. 2)

In response, the *National Agenda for Achieving Better Results for Children and Youth with Disabilities* (COSMOS, 1994) recommends that agencies define program results and functional learning outcomes for children and youth with disabilities and develop indicators that focus on those results and outcomes at the local, state, and building levels in collaboration with children and youth, families and community members. States such as Michigan, Delaware and Kentucky have made concerted efforts to produce disaggregated data on the achievement levels of students with disabilities. The NCEO has worked with the leaders of the National Assessment of Educational Progress to increase the number of students with disabilities included in that measure, with the intent of increasing the pool of

information available on outcomes (as well as improving the comparability of results across states) (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, McGrew and Vanderwood, 1994).

However, a number of authors have pointed out that information on outcomes, especially negative outcomes, provides little information about what actions to take to improve those outcomes (Horvath, 1992; Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Bruininks, Gilman, Deno, McGrew, and Shriner, 1992; Olsen and Massanari, 1991). While information on outcomes is necessary, it is not sufficient. There is growing awareness that it is essential to also have information on the inputs and processes that lead to achievement of those outcomes. The national emphasis on "Opportunity-to-Learn Standards" in Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994) is evidence that the pendulum is swinging back to the middle. Opportunity-to-learn standards have yet to be defined, but most likely will be drawn from the effective schools literature (Porter, 1993). Porter suggests that such standards can be used to explain outcomes (and he recommends using them for that purpose rather than as an accountability measure).

Future efforts to evaluate educational services to students with disabilities must recognize the need to gather information at all levels of implementation in order to understand what outcomes are or are not being achieved and what adjustments must be made to improve those outcomes. Stakeholders who have a vested interest in some of the process provisions of IDEA might want to advocate for folding key provisions into local and state Opportunity-To-Learn standards.

From Simple to Complex Conceptual Models

Chen (1990) suggests that evaluation is most effective when it is informed by a conceptual model of the program being evaluated. Such a model, frequently presented in both graphic and narrative form, defines the components of a program design and the interrelationships among those components (Lynch and Covert, 1981). Models used to drive special education evaluation have evolved from simple input-process-output lists to complex models which take into consideration context factors and external influences to special education services. The earliest models tended to be based on lists of activities or inputs, resources or processes, and outcomes or results that were considered to reflect an effective program, without demonstrating interrelationships among the components or taking into account factors outside of a narrow special education focus (e.g., see Olsen, 1979; Lieberman and McNeil, 1982; Borich, 1977; Gable, 1982; and Maher and Bennett, 1983).

More recently, models for services to students with disabilities have started to take into account a greater number of variables. The New Hampshire special education program improvement partnership incorporates a multi-level model and a wide range of indicators in the areas of

- student and program outcomes;
- philosophy, policies and procedures;
- resources; the school program;
- instructional practices;
- staff competencies, attitudes, and relationships;
- parent participation;
- school and classroom climate; and
- leadership (Lachat, Williams, and Brody, 1986).

West Virginia developed a multi-level model that defined inputs, processes and outcomes in ten activity areas:

- parent and community support,
- school based assistance teams,
- identification and referral,
- multidisciplinary assessment,
- eligibility determination,
- development of the IEP,
- placement and implementation,
- review of the IEP,
- exiting and transition, and
- program administration.

Outcomes from each activity are shown to be inputs for other activities and the interrelationships among effectiveness indicators is shown graphically and in narrative form (Olsen and Turley, 1988).

DeStefano and Wagner (1990) indicate that a conceptual framework "should include both proximal and distal outcomes, key independent variables that are expected to influence outcomes and indications of the expected relationship among them" (p. 21). Their model for outcome assessment in special education encompasses not only school programs and services and student outcomes, but also school contexts, individual/family/community characteristics, young adult outcomes and adult programs/services.

Education, especially education of students with disabilities, can no longer be viewed as a simple factory model of inputs, processes and outputs. Influences include context factors, family demographics, and a variety of interventions by other health and human service providers. In the future, persons evaluating special education programs will have to build into their conceptual models an increasing number of factors as human services become more interagency in nature and as educational services to students with disabilities become increasingly imbedded in services for all students.

Effectiveness Indicators for Special Education to Effectiveness Indicators for All

Effectiveness indicators in special education have been changing to reflect the changing service delivery system. Whereas indicators in the past described special education inputs, processes and outcomes in isolation, they are increasingly being described as a part of indicators for all students and for society in general. The effectiveness indicators (or standards, criteria, goals or targets) provide the basis for comparison to the actual state-of-affairs in a discrepancy evaluation model (Provus, 1971).

One of the earliest attempts to synthesize effectiveness indicators in special education was the work by the National RRC Panel on Indicators of Effectiveness in Special Education (1986). The Regional Resource Center (RRC) program conducted needs assessments in all SEAs and found that over 60% of the states had a need for a comprehensive reference tool by which agencies could judge their own effectiveness. An RRC task force found that "a great deal of redundant activity was occurring as state and local agencies sought to locate extant indicators of effectiveness in special education...the task force proposed that a document be developed...with the direct involvement of a broad-based panel of representative stakeholders" (p. 7-8). Research articles and state-developed indicator lists were synthesized into a comprehensive list of effectiveness indicators in six categories:

- philosophy,
- policies and practices;
- resource allocation;
- staffing and leadership;
- parent participation and community involvement;
- instruction; and
- program and student outcomes.

There were hundreds of indicators in the first sections, but only a few in the program and student outcome section. The indicator lists were subsequently used as adjuncts to state evaluation systems in a number of states (e.g., Maryland, New Hampshire, Florida) and at least one state, West Virginia, added new literature on pre-referral processes and reformatted the indicators into inputs, processes and outputs according to their model (Olsen and Turley, 1988). While the document was linked to general education effectiveness indicators and designed with the general education audience in mind, it had a clear special education focus.

A number of other indicator documents specific to special education were produced in the '80's and reported in the literature (e.g., Bickel and Bickel, 1986), in state reference guidelines (e.g., Florida, Virginia, Missouri, Utah, Kansas) and in local school district standards documents (e.g., Jefferson County Public Schools, 1988). These references usually addressed special education programs in general. However, a variety of indicator documents also were developed specific to early childhood programs (e.g., Iowa's Early Childhood Special Education Review), secondary transition programs (e.g., Hasazi, Hock and Cravedi-Cheng, 1993), and especially for services to students with severe disabilities (e.g., University of Vermont, 1987; Kleinert, Smith and Hudson, 1990; Meyer, Eichinger and Park-Lee, 1987; Johnson and Gadberry, 1981; Halvorsen and Sailor, 1989). As with the *Effectiveness Indicators for Special Education Programs,*, these documents focused on practices and resources rather than effects and outcomes. All of the documents were specific to special education, however.

The national movement toward inclusion is leading to a different view of effectiveness indicators for educational services to students with disabilities. Perhaps the watershed documents were produced by Gartner and Lipsky (1989) and Stainback and Stainback (1984) as they called for a unitary system of education and for personnel specializing in services for students with disabilities to become support staff in a regular education environment. The National Association of State Directors of Special Education endorsed this concept and other special education and general education groups are in accord. For example, the *National Agenda for Achieving Better Results for Children and Youth with Disabilities* calls for "a unified educational system (which) will incorporate equitable standards and high expectations for all children and youth" (COSMOS, 1994, p. 3).

General educators also are calling for a more inclusionary system. For example, the National Association of State Boards of Education endorsed such a system in its *Winners All* document (NASBE, 1992). Goals 2000 codifies the eight

national education goals and establishes a (NESIC). Likewise, the House and Senate committee language for Goals 2000 make it clear that Congress intends for the National Educational Standards and Improvement Council to ensure that state and local standard setting and assessment activities provide for all children in relation to the same eight national education goals.

The most recent effort to produce a comprehensive outcome and indicator system reflects this inclusionary orientation. The NCEO has developed a conceptual model of outcomes and is producing outcomes and indicators at six age levels (age 3, age 6, grade 4, grade 8, students exiting school and post school) in the areas of

- presence/participation,
- accommodation/adaptation/compensation,
- independence/responsibility,
- physical/mental health,
- social/behavior skills,
- contributions/citizenship,
- literacy and
- satisfaction (Ysseldyke, Thurlow and Shriner, 1992).

The entire model is based on an assumption of an integrated system. In fact, their conceptual model and all indicator documents are designed to apply to all students. Care has been taken to avoid language that implies a special education orientation (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Bruininks, Gilman, Deno, McGrew, and Shriner, 1992). State personnel also are being very careful to avoid being seen as separatists, ensuring that functional curricula and unique special education goals are eliminated or at least cross-matched to the outcomes and indicators for all students.

The debate regarding whether effectiveness indicators, and especially outcomes for all students, can meet the needs of students with disabilities is not over. Michigan has been engaged in a massive effort to identify the unique expected outcomes for students who exhibit specific impairments (e.g., visual impairment, hearing impairment, emotional impairment, learning disability). Expected outcome lists in Michigan usually begin with a statement such as, "Student completes the local minimum graduation requirements in all subject areas" (Frey, 1991); however, the remaining outcomes are always unique to the type of disability/impairment. The logic for separate outcomes has to do with the purpose of special education services. Michigan perceives that:

> "...the task of special education...is to limit handicaps, to compensate for the disability or limit the inability, to enable individuals to access the same

> knowledge as his (sic) nonhandicapped peers. To do this, special education attempts to discover what special education accommodations are necessary for students with an impairment to learn and achieve in education" (Frey, 1991, p. 6, emphsais in original).

The concern that the uniqueness of special education and its mission to provide specially designed instruction to students with disabilities will be lost is shared by others who fear that high expectations and common goals will mean that all students will have to meet the same standards in the same way regardless of disability, without accommodations (Little, 1993). Similarly, the disability community at large continues to have concerns about achieving positive outcomes unique to individuals with disabilities through all supports and services including residential, vocational, and social in addition to educational. The recently published *Outcome Based Performance Measures* by the Accreditation Council on Services for People with Disabilities (1993) specifies 30 life role outcome measures specific to people with disabilities and 17 outcome measures for organizations that provide supports and services for persons with disabilities.

Developers of outcomes and effectiveness indicators must find ways to maintain a focus on what makes education effective for all students and ensure that students with disabilities are included in the overall picture of education. At the same time, they must ensure the availability of outcomes and indicators that provide a vision of effective practice and a basis for gathering information about how to better meet the needs of students with disabilities. Educators must be prepared to respond to the expectations of advocates and professionals for positive life role outcomes. Specifying both generic and specific outcomes may be the only way to address both needs.

Summary and Conclusions

Fifteen years of evaluation evolution in special education have resulted in both negative and positive changes. Evaluation of educational services to students with disabilities still lacks clear definitions of terms. Debates about purposes, standards and procedures abound. Clear guidance from the Federal level regarding requirements for evaluating effectiveness of individualized education programs is probably not forthcoming, but there is expanding interest in having common data to answer critical outcome questions. Unfortunately, the orientation at state and national levels seems to have shifted from a focus on program improvement to a focus on accountability without a full understanding of how evaluative

information might be affected by a high stakes environment. Evaluation of outcomes for students with disabilities and evaluation of the effects of supports and services to individuals with disabilities are now viewed in the broader framework of conceptual models that includes context, input and process variables that affect those outcomes and effects.

The past fifteen years of experiences in evaluating services for students with disabilities lead this author to make the following recommendations for future evaluators:

1. Approach the evaluation enterprise with a clear purpose in mind, determining whether the primary intent is to ensure accountability or program improvement, and being aware that one system is unlikely to meet both purposes.

2. Advocate for development of multiple approaches at the state and national levels that support local level decision making without compromising state level data integrity.

3. Use incentives and sanctions cautiously, being aware of the potential negative side effects of high stakes environments.

4. Base evaluations on conceptual models that show the expected linkages among the inputs, processes and outcomes of each educational service and experience that affect students with disabilities in order to interpret and use the evaluative information.

5. Define effectiveness indicators and especially outcomes for students with disabilities within the context of outcomes for all students, ensuring that the unique needs of students with disabilities for access, accommodation, adaptation and compensation are addressed.

We can benefit from the developments and experiences of the past. Doing so could mean that another retrospective such as this in the year 2009 might describe a state-of-affairs in which adequate information on the progress of students with disabilities is being documented and used within a comprehensive evaluation framework for all of education.

References

Accreditation Council on Services for People with Disabilities. (1993). *Outcome based performance measures*. Landover, MD: Author.

Bickel, W.E. and Bickel, D.D. (1986). Effective schools, classrooms, and instruction: Implications for special education. *Exceptional Children, 52* (6), 489-500.

Borich, G.D. (1977). Program evaluation: new concept, new methods. *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 9 (3), 1-14.

Borich, G.D. and Nance, D.D. (1987). Evaluating special education programs: Shifting the professional mandate from process to outcome. *Remedial and Special Education, 8* (3), 7-16.

Brinkerhoff, R.O., Brethower, D.M., Hluchyj, T. & Nowakowski, J.R. (1983). *Program evaluation: A practitioner's guide for trainers and educators -- design manual*. Boston, MA: Kluwer-Nijhoff Publishing.

California Office of Special Education. (1982). *Guide to special education program evaluation*. Sacramento, CA: California State Department of Education.

Campeau, P. (1993). *Project PASS (Performance assessment for self-sufficiency)*, Palo Alto, CA: American Institutes for Research.

Center for Policy Options in Special Education. (1992). *Policy issues and elements: Outcomes-based accountability*, Rockville, MD: WESTAT.

Chen, H. (1990). Issues in constructing program theory. *New directions for program evaluation: Advances in program theory, No. 47*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Publishers.

COSMOS Corporation. (1994). *The National Agenda for achieving better results for children and youth with disabilities*, Washington, DC: Author

Council of Administrators of Special Education, Incorporated. (1983). *Models for evaluation and related services at the local level*. Conference Report: Institute on Special Education Programs, December 30, 1983. Washington, DC: Associate Consultants, Inc.

DeStefano, L. (1990). Evaluating effectiveness: Federal expectations and local capabilities. *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 16,* 257-269.

DeStefano, L. & Wagner, M. (1990). *Outcome assessment in special education: lessons learned*. Champaign, IL: Transition Institute at Illinois.

Florida Department of Education. Project ESE (7 booklets). Bureau of Education for Exceptional Students, Tallahassee, Florida, 1985.

Frey, W.D. (1991). *Outcome indicators for special education: A model for studying the expected outcomes of education for students with disabilities.* East Lansing, MI: Center for Quality Special Education.

Fullan, M. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change.*-2nd edition. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.

Gable, R.K. (1982). A model for evaluating special education programs: An application to determining the management and instructional benefits of microcomputers. *Journal of Special Education Technology, V* (2), 35-43.

Gartner, A. and Lipsky, D.K. (1989). *The yoke of special education: How to break it,* New York: National Center on Education and the Economy.

George, M.P., George, N.L and Grosenick, J.K. (1990). Features of program evaluation in special education. *Remedial and Special Education, 11* (5), 23-30.

Goals 2000: Educate America Act. Public Law 103-227. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Gonzalez, P. (1992). *State procedures for the evaluation of special education program effectiveness.* Washington, DC: Project FORUM, National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

Gray, J. (1994). The Texas results based monitoring system. Presentation at the National Agenda Conference. Washington, DC, July 11, 1994.

Halvorsen, A.T. & Sailor, W. (1989). *Integration of students with severe and profound disabilities: A review of research.* California Research Institute on the Integration of Students with Severe Disabilities.

Hasazi, S.B.; Hock, M.; and Cravedi-Cheng, L. (1993). *Vermont's post school indicators project: Dissemination materials.* Burlington, VT: Vermont's Transition Systems Change Project.

Horvath, L.J. (1985). A quantitative program evaluation approach to evaluating quality special education programs. In *Quantitative vs. qualitative approaches to quality special education program evaluation* (pp. 3-20). Bloomington, IN: Council of Administrators of Special Education.

Horvath, L.J. (1992). Educating policy makers on the importance of a comprehensive evaluation approach. Presentation at the American Evaluation Association Annual Meeting, Seattle, WA, November 5, 1992.

Illinois State Board of Education. (1982). *Handbook for evaluation of special education effectiveness.* Springfield, IL: Author.

Jefferson County Public Schools. (1988). *Best practice standards for the teacher of the exceptional child.* Louisville, KY: Author.

Johnson, R.A. and Gadberry, E.M. (1981). A cognitive roadmap for administrators and supervisors: Design, delivery and evaluation of services for the severely handicapped. From: The Severely and Profoundly Handicapped Child, Proceedings from the 1981 Statewide Institute for Educators of the Severely and Profoundly Handicapped. Springfield, IL: Illinois State Board of Education.

Kleinert, H., Smith, P. and Hudson, M. (1990). *Quality program indicators manual for students with moderate and severe handicaps.* Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute: Kentucky Systems Change Project for Students with Severe Handicaps.

Lachat, M.A. (1985). *Quality and effectiveness indicators reflected in special education, effective schools, and independent living literature.* East Kingston, NH: New Hampshire Special Education Evaluation Project, Center for Resource Management.

Lachat, M.A.; Williams, M.; and Brody, S. (1986). *Profiling effectiveness in special education: A program improvement system based on indicators of effectiveness,* Hampton, NH: Center for Resource Management, Inc.

Lewis, A. (1991). Churning up the waters in special education. *Phi Delta Kappan, 73* (2) 100-101.

Lieberman, L.M. and McNeil, D. (1982). Evaluating special education programs. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 15* (2), 121-122.

Little, D.L. (1993). *Outcome-based education and students with learning disabilities.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina.

Lynch, K.B. and Covert, R.W. (1981). *Program evaluation: A training packet for special education administrators. Part I: Developing the program design.* Charlottesville, VA: Evaluation Research Center.

Maher, C.A. and Bennett, R.E. (1983). A systems framework for special education program evaluation. *Diagnostique, 8* (4), 203-212.

Maher, C.A. & Bennett, R.E. (1984). *Planning and evaluating special education services.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Maher, C.A., Coppola, A.J., Ongley, C., and Kahn, H. (1986). *Special education program evaluation: A resource manual.* Hartford, CT: State of Connecticut Department of Education.

Massachusetts Division of Special Education. (1981). *Special Education Program Evaluation: A management tool.* Quincy, MA: Massachusetts Department of Education.

McLaughlin, J.A. (1988). *Special education program evaluation: An overview.* Bloomington, IN: Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) Research Committee.

McLaughlin, J.A. (1990). *A guide for planning and conducting an evaluation of local Special education programs in Kansas.* Topeka, KS: Kansas State Board of Education.

McLaughlin, J.A. (1990). *Special education program evaluation: A planning guide.* Blacksburg, VA: Institute for the Study of Exceptionalities.

Meyer, L.H., Eichinger, J. & Park-Lee, S. (1987). A validation of program quality indicators in educational services for students with severe disabilities. *Journal for the association of persons with severe handicaps, 12* (4) 251-263.

Missouri Section of Special Education. (1985). *Special education evaluation model for Missouri.* Columbia, MO: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Nance, D. and Borich, G. (1986). *Manual for the special education evaluation system: Compliance, coordination, and change measures.* Austin, TX: The Special Education Evaluation Institute.

National Association of State Boards of Education. (October 1992). *Winners All: A call for inclusive schools.* The report of the NASBE study group on special education. Alexandria, VA: Author.

National Center on Educational Outcomes. (July, 1991). *Synthesis report: Assessing Educational Outcomes: State Activity and Literature Integration.* Minneapolis, MN: Author.

National Council on Disability. (1989). *The education of students with disabilities: Where do we stand? -- A report to the president of the congress of the United States.* Washington, DC: National Council on Disability.

National RRC Panel on Indicators of Effectiveness in Special Education. (1986). *Effectiveness indicators for special education: A reference tool.* Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, Mid-South Regional Resource Center.

North Carolina Division for Exceptional Children. (1983). *Special Education Program Quality Evaluation.* Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

Olsen, K. (1979). *Evaluating Effectiveness of Special Education Programs.* Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, Mid-South Regional Resource Center.

Olsen, K. (1984). *State program evaluation in special education: Issues, practices and some reflections.* Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, Mid-South Regional Resource Center.

Olsen, K. (1986). *State Program Evaluation Efforts: Needs and approaches.* Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, Mid-South Regional Resource Center.

Olsen, K. (1994). What we know about using data to lead change. Presentation at the National Agenda Conference. Washington, DC, July 11, 1994.

Olsen, K.R. & Massanari, C. (1991) *Special Education Program Evaluation: What should states consider?.* Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, Mid-South Regional Resource Center.

Olsen, K.R. & Turley, C.R. (1988). *Description of effective special education programs in West Virginia: A reference tool for the special education effectiveness review (SEER) system.* Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, Mid-South Regional Resource Center.

Porter, A. (1993). Defining and measuring opportunity to learn in *The debate on opportunity-to-learn standards: Supporting Works.* Papers commissioned by the National Governor's Association. Washington, DC.

Provus, M. (1971) *Discrepancy evaluation for educational program improvement and assessment.* Berkeley, CA: McCutchen Publications.

Rhode Island Department of Education. (1984). *A self-study guide for the evaluation of special education programs.* Providence, RI: Author.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (1988). *Serving handicapped children: A special report.* Princeton, NJ: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Rogers, E. (1983). *Diffusion of innovations*-Third Edition. New York: The Free Press (Division of Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc.).

Stainback, S. and Stainback, W. (1984). A rational for the merger of special and regular education. *Exceptional Children, 51* (2), 102-111.

University of Vermont Center for Developmental Disabilities. (1987). *Best practice guidelines for students with intensive educational needs.* Burlington, VT: Author.

Utah Consortium of Local Directors of Special Education. (1988). *Utah special education evaluation system (Utah SEES).* Utah: Author.

Vogelsberg, R.T. (1994). Educational reform, inclusion, and special education: Are we focused on student outcomes?, *Quality Outcomes-Driven Education, 3* (4), 24-31.

Wang, M.C. (1987). Toward achieving educational excellence for all students: Program design and student outcomes. *Remedial and special education, 8* (3) 25-34.

Ysseldyke, J; Thurlow, M.; Bruininks, R.; Gilman, C.; Deno, S.; McGrew, K.; and Shriner, J. (1992). *An evolving model of educational outcomes for children and youth with disabilities.*- Working Paper Number 2. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes.

Ysseldyke, J; Thurlow, M.; McGrew, K.; and Vanderwood, M. (1994). *Making decisions about the inclusion of students with disabilities in large-scale assessments: A report on a working conference to develop guidelines on inclusion and accommodations* . Synthesis Report 13, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes.

Ysseldyke, J; Thurlow, M.; and Shriner, J.G. (1992). Outcomes are for special educators too. *Teaching Exceptional Children, Fall* , 36-50.

Zirkel, P.A. (1990, August 31). 'Backlash' threatens special education. *Education Week.*

Wagner, M. (1990). *Young people with disabilities: How are they doing? - A comprehensive report from Wave I of the National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students.* Menlo Park: CA: SRI International.